

**POETIC BEAUTY & SIMPLICITY OF JIBANANANDA DAS FROM READER'S  
PERSPECTIVE**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of English & Humanities in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelors of Arts in English**

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### **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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### **Approval**

The thesis titled “Poetic Beauty & Simplicity of Jibanananda Das From Reader’s Perspective” submitted by Adrita Roy Choudhury (ID: 20103025) of 12<sup>th</sup> semester, Fall 2023 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelors of Arts in English on 6th January, 2024.

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### **Dedication**

Celebrating the hard work and enthusiasm of those who are devotedly giving efforts to conclude their thesis in spite of thousands of stumbling blocks & to my beloved family.

### **Acknowledgement**

The journey of education has always been challenging, yet I am almost at the end of this adventurer's journey. First and foremost, I am immensely grateful to my supervisor Dr. Mahruba Mowtushi ma'am for her patience, guidance, support, encouragement and insightful feedback throughout the entire process.

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### Abstract

Folk tales or mythical stories are not the only part of Bengali literature. Bengali literature has been more versatile and enriched since the ancient period. Through the hands of Bengal's tremendous poets and writers, Bengali literature has gained recognition and unforgettable status in the world court. Jibanananda Das is one of them who brought a touch of contemporary concepts to Bengali literature. I wrote this thesis completely from a reader's view; where I have tried to understand what the poet wants to convey, by reading his poems. To recognize deeply, I have researched some of his poems and discussed them coherently.

This paper is based on Jibanananda Das' creative works that highlighted the human and ecological bond, life with simplicity and human's tender emotions.

**Keyword:** Jibanananda Das, modernism, ecology, emotion, simplicity, life, love, minimalism, Bengali literature.

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## Introduction

One of the most incredible elements that has given Bengal a sophisticated identity is its rich and resourceful history of literature. From the ancient period, Bengali literature tried to bring out various aspects starting from socio-economic situation to trade, education and many more.

Historians suspects that *Charyapada*<sup>1</sup> is the first Bengali literature. Bengali literature, with its rich tapestry of ardor and edification, has been embellished by the everlasting contributions of poets who have left an indelible imprint on Bengali literary canvas.

Nevertheless, the extraordinary tapestry has also been highlighted by delicate emotional and cultural subtleties, creating poems of awe-inspiring passion and timeless literary splendor.

Jibananda Das stands out as a crucial figure in the realm, who is regarded as a north star of Bengal's modernist literary journey. He was born on February 17, 1899, in Barishal and navigated the imaginative up draught of Bengali literature throughout a period of top-notch social and political upheavals. Jibanananda Das' literary efforts demonstrate his potential to liberate the constraints of conventional poetic norms and embrace new independent structures.

Jibanananda Das' poetry makes readers aware of society, civilization, and consciousness.

Remembering poets like Rabindranath, Ezra, Pound, Eliot, Pablo, Neruda, Octavio Paz, etc., he can relinquish the seat of excellence. He has established a link between then and now through poetry.

He is the main poet of modern life consciousness. The poet of solitude, the poet is engrossed in the diversity of Bengal's nature. In his view, Bangladesh is a unique beauty. This is reflected in many poems of Jibanananda Das' poetry. His poetry books are Jharapalak, Gray

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<sup>1</sup> Charyapada, a collection of Buddhist chant poems of realization written by Shabrpa. It was originally in Abahattha language which changed over time in different stages of evolution and transformed into present day Bengali language.

Manuscript, Banalata Sen, Rupasi Bangla, Mahaprithibi, Seven Star Timir, and Bela Abela Kalbela.

Das' poetry takes the reader on a mesmerizing adventure through the diffused currents of human cognizance. His lyrics offer a profound contemplation on the intricacies of existence, the ephemeral essence of existence, and the eternal. The poet's inward vision is mixed with an enthusiastic remark of the arena around him, presenting readers a contemplated replica of their very own hopes, struggles, and goals. Das' poetry is prominent through his specific use of coloration and tone and frequently covers themes of nature, love, and the human condition. His use of vivid imagery and unorthodox syntax recalls the modernist<sup>2</sup> style, while his emphasis on the environment and the link between humans and nature corresponds with the ideals of ecocriticism. For example, in his poem *Banalata Sen*, Das describes a woman's attractiveness in reference to the natural world: "Her hair the color of Champa flowers, her face like the moon in autumn."<sup>3</sup> This fusion of human and natural elements is unique. When an idea pokes him, he forms it with words, analogies, and pictures that set him apart from all others. Jibanananda Das' poetry is meant to be felt rather than simply read or heard. This tremendous connection between the human and natural aspects is a defining feature of modernist eco-critical writing. Moreover, His poetry is outstanding by means of its use of imagery and symbolism, as well as its investigation of nature. His poetry is also characterized by a deep love for nature and a feel of responsibility for it. Das' paintings, similarly to their use of images, observe the modernist way

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<sup>2</sup> Modernism indicates a period of experiments on different forms of art that took place from the late 19th century to mid20th century. Modernist writers write from the first person's point of view and focus on subjects like individuality, absurdist, capitalism, urbanization and industrialization, isolation etc.

<sup>3</sup> Banalata Sen is a character in Jibanananda Das' poem and also the name of one of his poem collections

of life of their experiments with form and shape. His literary landscape has passed through sizable modifications over time, reflecting not only his non-public increase but also the converting attitudes toward the surroundings in society. However, as he developed as a poet, his writings came to show a deeper know-how of human-nature interplay. However, as he progressed as a creator, his writings commenced to demonstrate an extra know-how of the connection between humans and nature. Other of his paintings, then again, depict nature as separate or adversarial to human lifestyles, reflecting an eco-critical perspective emphasizing the interconnectedness of all dwelling creatures. Furthermore, Jibanananda Das' emotional landscape penetrates deeper into the complexities of the human soul. His lyrics are filled with deep sorrow, introspective mirrored image, and a clear comprehension of the fleeting nature of human feelings. Das, as a poet exquisitely tuned to the heartbeat of his day, correctly catches the zeitgeist of the moment, echoing the chaotic socio-political landscape of Bengal throughout the early to mid-20th century.

This thesis seeks to dive deeply into the world of Jibanananda Das' literary legacy, providing light on the interaction of themes, human-nature bond, the muted color palette, simplicity and life, and the profound emotional depth that characterizes his poetry unique. Das within the larger landscape of Bengali literature throughout the course of his life. This quest takes us on a remarkable journey inside Jibanananda Das' poetic realm, where words serve as a conduit to uncover the enigmas of life and emotions that resonate across time.

## **Research Question**

Human life and nature are distantly related and sophistication can be found in minimal - this is only revealed deeply in Jibanananda Das' poetry. Why is his work intended to be perceived but not to be heard only?

## **Rationale**

This research paper aims to explore the spiritual relationship of man with nature, the rich taste of sophistication within simplicity through the poetry of Jibanananda Das' poetical works. Besides, Jibanananda Das has brought a touch of modernity in Bengali literature and has shown various images of human life by keeping nature as the main element. For the investigation, I will discuss four poems of Jibanananda Das that were translated by Clinton B. Seely, an American translator.

## **Methodology & Theoretical Framework**

The studies will mainly depend upon a qualitative technique, accomplishing a critical reading of the primary text, *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das* by Clinton B. Seely, and Jibanananda Das' poems - "Poth Hata", "Abar Ashibo Phire", "Banglar Mukh" and "Banalata Sen" which are translated by Seely. The important evaluation of thematic factors can be crafted via an in-intensity exploration of decided concepts of Modernism and Ecocriticism theories. Additionally, a numerous range of journals and journal articles could be consulted to enhance the intensity and breadth of the have a look at, providing a nuanced know-how of the selected topics.

## Literature Review

In the realm of literary luminaries at some stage in his era, the pervasive effect of European poets and writers, appreciably exemplified by the impact of Indian literary figures such as Rabindranath Tagore and Bankim Chandra, turned palpable. Yet, amidst this triumphing fashion, Jibanananda Das emerged as a unique exception. In a noteworthy interview, Buddhadeva Basu aptly extols Das as a "Pure Poet," a designation rooted in the classy principles introduced by the French symbolists, emphasizing poetry without didacticism (Bose,43). Jibanananda Das, a preeminent poet of the Post-Tagore generation, is often referred to as the "Loneliest Poet" because of his exclusive capacity to craft an enigmatic realm wherein he skillfully encapsulates excellent imagery. This is completed through the adept incorporation of remarkable and unconventional similes, metaphors, and allusions, thereby illuminating the multifaceted exceptional attributes inherent in ostensibly common topics. Rabindranath Tagore, a prominent literary discern, lauded the poetry of Das, describing it as "Chitrorupomoy " for its high-quality portrayal of nature and herbal elements (Anderson and Bose). Similarly, one of the poets from the Panch Pandav titled Das as "Nirjonotomo Kobi." Das himself recognizes the numerous interpretations of his paintings, declaring, "Someone has termed my poetry and the poet behind it as lonely or the loneliest; some have asserted that the poems predominantly engage with Nature and revive historic and social sense of right and wrong. Others have deemed the portions symbolic, subconscious, and surrealistic. I actually have located numerous motives of my poems, and almost all feedback keeps partial truth"(Sonali). Thus, Das positions himself as a self-proclaimed surrealistic, mysterious, and lonely poet inside the realm of Bangla literature.

Das's poetic tapestry is characterized by way of a nuanced interaction of tone and coloration, in which he delicately infuses his verses with a poignant combo of depression, solitude, and a story woven with the threads of his unrequited love, the item of which frequently conceal curiosity for his readers. Time and again, readers locate themselves captivated by the evocative splendor that Das masterfully attracts from the natural enchantment of Bengal, a class that unfolds in the verses like an interesting landscape. Notably, through this creative bond of thematic richness and vivid imagery, Jibanananda Das crafts his poetic oeuvre distinguished by one-of-a-kind color scheme resonating with readers, inviting them right into a magical world where feelings are delicately painted in colors of gray and muted green, developing a long-lasting aesthetic experience of holding on and letting go.

Just like the various uses of colors, the theme and details of Jibanananda Das' poetry can be described from numerous angles. And this is the reason, readers as well as curious and knowledge-thirst admirers of his, tried to analyze his writing pieces from different perspectives like modernism, romanticism, ecocriticism, surrealism, existentialism and many more. Kris Manjapra in his journal article *From Imperial To International Horizon*, establishes a connection between modernism in Das' writing by drawing parallels with the creative experimentation that befell in colonial Bengal. This experimentation aimed to paint the abject aspects, injustices, and irrationalities of lifestyles while simultaneously serving as a catalyst for political resistance and spiritual renewal. In the vibrant highbrow circles of Calcutta, Das and other young minds actively engaged in discussions on modernist aesthetics and delved into the works of overseas modernist artists.

The Kallol writers, along with Das, fostered dialogues with modernist writers from foreign places via essays and translations dedicated to approximately thirty-one foreign modernist artists. However, the traditional exploration of the "Kallol Era"<sup>4</sup> tends to be restricted to literary records, emphasizing the endeavors of younger writers to interrupt unfastened from the influential fashion of Rabindranath Tagore, the outstanding grasp. It is noteworthy that the observer of this era ought to now not be confined totally to literary traits, because it extends past to embody geopolitical and generational divides. This popularity necessitates overarching narratives of the "Globalization of the West" or "Global Lifestyles" of capitalism, which frequently contain studies of colonial Indian highbrow records.

For this purpose, according to Clinton B. Seely's *A Poet Apart: A Literary Biography of the Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das (1899-1954)*, the Kallol Era stands out as a pivotal liquidation inside the evolution of modern-day Bengali literature. Das' poetry commonly explores topics of nature, love, and the human condition. His use of vivid imagery and unconventional syntax inspires modernist style, however his emphasis on the environment and the relationship among humans and nature aligns to ecocriticism ideas. The combination of human and nature additives is particular. When a concept strikes him, he forms it with words, analogies, and visuals that distinguish him aside from anybody else. Jibanananda Das' poetry is designed to be felt in preference to merely read or heard. This integration of human and ecological factors is a distinguishing trait of modernist and eco-critical literature.

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<sup>4</sup> Kollol Era: It was a Bengali Literary movement , also known as the Renaissance of Bengali Literature when young and post Rabindrikera writers were on a mission to unfollow the conventional literary pattern and to create their own forms.

The hallmark of the Kallol Era became the poets' collective quest to forge a new kind of poetry—one which turned into deeply non-public, subjective, and attuned to the nuances of the modern-day world. This avant-garde organization, led by Jibanananda Das, delved into uncharted territories, exploring novel forms, styles, and subject matters. Their creative endeavors had been not handiest artistic but also pondered the socio-political currents of the time, encapsulating a burgeoning sense of nationalism and a fervent choice for social reform.

The Kallol Era, marked by means of its creativity and innovative spirit, laid the muse for the following modernist movement in Bengali literature. Jibanananda Das, through his groundbreaking paintings, particularly his debut poetry collection "Jhara Palok" (Fallen Feathers), performed a pivotal function in shaping and advancing this literary revolution. His contributions not simplest distinguished him as a leading poet of his era but additionally solidified his location in the annals of Bengali literature as a luminary of the Kallol Era.

In Md. Shamim Mondol's journal titled *Jibanananda Das' Aesthetics in Beautiful Bengal: An Eco-Critical Study*, the author delves into the poetry of Jibanananda Das, particularly specializing in "Beautiful Bengal," from the angle of eco-grievance. This critical exam centers on Das' nuanced observations and depictions of nature, emphasizing the interconnectedness between human beings and the surroundings. Mondol highlighted the implicit reviews within Das' verses, losing mild on humanity's detrimental effect on the natural global.

The principal argument of the article posits that Das' poetry serves as a poignant name to motion, urging readers to actively participate within the maintenance of the surroundings and the



cultivation of a harmonious ecosystem. Mondol indicates that using an eco-vital lens is instrumental in unraveling the problematic environmental subject matters embedded in Das's poetic expressions. This analytical method not only enriches the expertise of Das's work however additionally underscores the relevance of eco-complaint in exploring the intersection of literature and environmental cognizance. Furthermore, the journal by Shamim Mondal also stated that Jibanananda Das' lyrical canvas is carefully woven with strands that connect him to Bengal's rich tapestry of history and way of life. His lines mirror the vicinity's essence, complete with references to undying myths, folklore, historic records, noteworthy individuals, and the very landscapes that constitute Bengal. Nature dances throughout the lines, a consistent associate in Das' lyrical voyage, with timber swaying, birds chirping, flora growing, and rivers flowing. In the center of this poetic birthday party, you may hear his unhappy condemnation of unbridled capitalism and industrial progress, bemoaning the environmental toll. What distinguishes Das is his flawless amalgamation of history and environment. He produces traces that reverberate with a self-styled lyrical and shiny imagism, absolutely acceptable to the present day sensibility, rooted in the indigenous spirit of Bengal. His mirrored image on the cohabitation of mankind and the natural environment draws similarities to existentialist standards, presenting a prism through which to look at the problems of the current day. In essence, Jibanananda Das' poetry turns into an everlasting hymn to Bengal's history and tradition, connecting with the sensitive threads of nature and reflecting the worries of a conscious observer in the midst of societal and environmental modifications.

Delving into the pages of Md. Saber-E-Montana's *Temporality Veiled with Surrealism: A Study of Jibanananda Das' Selected Poems* is like an enchanting voyage into the enigmatic universe of

Das' poetry. The author deftly unravels the poet's lines' elaborate strands of surrealism and existentialism, shining light at the practical dance with the time that lurks underlying the seemingly unusual tapestry((Saber-E-Montana).

Montaha convincingly demonstrates that Das' surrealistic method is not an accidental event, however as an alternative an intentional engagement with time in its exceptional manifestations. The poet, it seems, conceals temporality with a planned sample, generating a lyrical surroundings in which time assumes a mysterious shape. The chapter "Grey Manuscripts," in which Montaha discerns the remarkable effect of existentialist philosophy, is a terrific jewel exposed in Das' repertory. Life's intrinsic meaninglessness, the looming shadow of demise, the elusive nature of lifestyles's motive, and tangible undercurrents of distress and frustration all come to the fore in these lyrics. Das seems to be wrestling with existential quandaries, portraying them on the canvas of his poetic musings.

The study's qualitative aspect is praiseworthy, because it employs logical interpretation and evaluation of statistics drawn from each primary and secondary asset. This methodical method offers credibility to the investigation, offering readers with a comprehensive comprehension of Das' surrealist and existentialist complexities. The take a look at qualitative issue is praiseworthy since it employs logical interpretation and evaluation of statistics drawn from each number one and secondary resources. This methodical approach gives credibility to the research, presenting readers with a complete comprehension of Das' surrealist and existentialist complexities.

As the pages unfold, Montaha deftly concludes that Das' surrealism is a subtle portrayal of his conscious mind at motion, in place of a separation from awareness. Traces of Das' deep pondering are proven within the unconventional presentation of the subject count, encouraging readers to understand the useful creativity at the back of the seemingly atypical lyrics.

In another journal titled *Life, a Drop of Water*, the author Biswarup Das describes Jibanananda Das as a poet who felt that learning the facts about the universe became like chasing a problematic butterfly—it became hard for everyday people to seize. Das delves into Jibanananda's poetry, demonstrating how the poet's concept of reality corresponds to what this German thinker, Immanuel Kant, stated. “Jibanananda seems to be agreeing with Kant's ideas of 'phenomenon' (how matters look) and 'noumenon' (the genuine problem)”.

Das factors out that Jibanananda's poetry has an exceptional subject matter of appearance versus the reality. What appears to be actual may additionally simplest be the pinnacle of the iceberg. It is as though Jibanananda is saying, " Truth is playing hide and seek on this global we see" (Das). Jibanananda is not moping over not locating the truth. He takes a diversion into the enchanted realm of delusion. It is as though he's building a hidden lair wherein he may create his own truth.

Das<sup>5</sup> made a positive impression that we observe how tons of Jibanananda favored Bengal's beautiful surroundings. It is as if he became head over heels in love with his place of origin. But, and here's the twist, he wasn't depending on the real Bengal for happiness. Rather he created this

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<sup>5</sup> Bishwarup Das : Writer

second mythical Bengal in his creativeness, an area wherein he may get the fulfillment he craved.

The presentation of Jibanananda's excessive ardor for Bengal's stunning splendor is a gripping function of Das' analysis. This love turns into a light, pointing the poet to a second extraordinary global—one created by means of the poet's imagination. Das deftly navigates via the phrases that resonate with the reverberation of Jibanananda's longing in this international, in which the poet's want for fulfillment finds expression. In this journal, *Neither Peace nor Love or Dream* Biswarup Das creates a brilliant portrait of Jibanananda Das as a poet who, privy to the limitations of human understanding, is going on a poetic voyage.

### **Jibanananda Das & His Poetic Artwork**

Jibanananda Das, a preeminent poet of 20th century Bengali literature, boosted up the standard of Bengal's literature benchmark with his tremendous poetic creation. He has his own aesthetic style of writing that is not followed by any other poet's footprint. This uniqueness of Das highlighted him as the Kollol era's most significant figure.

Although his poems are united by the recurring elements and theme of Bengal's nature, human life, value of simplicity and elegance but divided by the perspectives of his readers. Fascinating fact is, the presence of environmental concerns, romance, melancholy, death, life, existence, surrealistic view, absurdism, rejuvenation and love for beloved motherland all can be found in one poem and each poem of him covers these topics more or less. His tremendous creations such as Windy Night, Merged Into The Skies, Shadows, After Twenty Years, Banalata Sen and many more can be marked as a perfect example that covers.

Despite the fact that, when he was alive he did not get the publicity and fame but after his tragic death, when his creations started to publish rapidly, people got to know more about him and his literary pieces. And, those became an essential part of since 20th century to till now at Bengali people's life. Although the subject matter of his writings is based on the previously mentioned themes, he is widely known as a nature poet because almost every plot of his poems depends on the presence of nature. The simple yet deep spiritual bond between man and nature is repeatedly revealed in his poems. And for his ability to express deep feelings in simple sentences, his poetry has earned the status of Bengali modern literature which did not follow the structure of so-called Bengali literature.

His readers and other critics stated that, Jibanananda expressed his tender emotions through an artistic way which is his poetry and it was not for what others think but what he used to feel and see about his loving Bengal, its flora and fauna and simplicity of the surrounding. His poem often employs unique language and unorthodox forms, reflecting the contemporary search for new techniques of interaction. This artistic invention incorporates an even more sophisticated illustration of simplicity that goes beyond typical literary guidelines.

### **Presence of Modernist Ecocriticism in Das' Writing**

Modernist Criticism often explores the concept of infinite time and eternity in nature. Das' poetry frequently contemplates the timeless aspects of the natural world. Modernism was an intellectual pioneering movement that took place in the end of 19th century to mid20th century aimed to decline conventional norms and promote innovative literary approaches. Jibanananda Das, an acclaimed Bengali poet, addressed as the modernist poet of Bengali literature, deployed insightful sentences to explore the complexities of human life and the natural world around us. His writings correspond with contemporary concepts, applying spontaneous poetry and allegory to portray his thoughts. By indulging himself in nature's immortal cycle, he realized an ordinariness that resonates with the fast and fleeting rhythm of contemporary society. The belief of boundless period and eternity throughout the context of nature has been deeply investigated in modernist ecocriticism. Das' poetry frequently concentrates on the perpetual facts of nature.

Das' creative work frequently descends beyond the complicated nature of human emotions, analyzing subjects such as love, desire, and philosophical contemplation. His examination of

nature and the eco-critical views coordinates with modernism emphasizing the exquisite beauty of the natural landscape and the core connection between humans and their environment. His compositions provoke awe and admiration for the universe's serenity and harmony, encouraging readers to rethink their relationship with mother earth.

By analyzing Das' work through a modernist eco-critical concept lens, readers can delve deep into his artistic representation of the ecological world and its impact on our day to day lives. Furthermore, by exploring his writings more, we will gain a great understanding on the manner in which literature may convey and transform our initial impressions of the natural world while encouraging ourselves to appreciate minimalism<sup>6</sup> and sustainability<sup>7</sup> in every aspect of our lives.

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<sup>6</sup> Minimalism: It is a philosophical and designing concept that focuses on what creates a value in our life keeping aside the rest. These artistic movements took place after World War II especially in the field of music and American visual art in the 1960s to early 1970s.

<sup>7</sup> Sustainability is a new approach that focuses on the balance of the environment along with economic growth.

## Chapter 1 : Portrayal of Life & Simplicity

If any writer has the ability to beautifully script the words and thoughts, then it can be said without any hesitation that no other poet of Bengal has expressed such deeply in very clear and simple language like Jibanananda Das. Many unknown plants, animals and plants appear in new identities in his poems. Even the trivial things of the beloved homeland were captured in his eyes amazingly. He was the first to express the complexity of our life in poetry with intense understanding. Das' style of expression and language are crucial in the conceptual framework of Modernist Ecocriticism. Das' creative work evokes a desire to find tranquility in the simplest aspects of rural or natural environments, rather than the adverse effects of contemporary society. This inclination corresponds to the modernist notion of disconnection from the urbanized, industrialized world. The poet craves an escape to a more genuine basic living, which is frequently shown through the lens of the countryside surroundings.

He is regarded as the poet of Bengal's water, Bengal's soil and people. In terms of artistic sense, aesthetics and sophisticated wording, he is the best modernist poet of the 20th century. Das digs deeply into the underlying splendor of the simplicity, throughout his poetic verses, paying attention to the mundane elements of life that often get disregarded. His poetic artwork never forgets to paint the lucid scenario of simplicity and interconnection of everyday life. He interprets the delicate balance between human and the environment and elicits admiration for the natural world. Das' poetry frequently offers an affirmation of the elegance that can be found in simple sentences, reminding readers to cherish the little moments and learn about the significance in the insignificant.



For instance, if we look at his poem “Poth Hata (Walking)”, we can find that the poet describes everyday life in Kolkata throughout his poem. And the themes that he brings out in this poem are very familiar and insignificant elements around us which are closely related to our daily life.

*As if beckoned by a memory, alone I walked many a sidewalk  
Of this city. I often watched bus and tram plying their designated ways,  
And then at last to leave their route and calmly enter into a world of sleep.*

*The whole night through, gaslights perform their tasks, burning brightly.  
None errs: bricks, buildings, billboards, windows, doors, roofs,  
All silently perceived their need for sleep beneath the sky.*

While walking in the streets of Calcutta, he spotted the ordinary elements of this city. He felt the solitude among the crowds not only from his side but also the loneliness of the tiniest pieces around him. He spoke of house signboards, he envisions gaslights as a night watchman or a guide, who walks side by side with the passersby so that they do not lose their way in the dark or can protect themselves from unexpected dangers. At the same time, he brought up the tall monument, standing alone in the city crowd that represents us, the human who even in thousands of people feel the loneliness in certain times. He also mentioned the tram-bus, the budget friendly transportation of the people of Calcutta. Observing very simple ordinary themes, he has scripted the daily life of the city dwellers in an easy appealing language.

The poem also depicts how in certain times, people feel lonely even in the crowd of urban life. Not just humans ; the poet has also presented the loneliness of inanimate objects very beautifully in his poem. He wanted to convey a message that loneliness applies to all situations. A thing that has a soul is not only one that feels loneliness. Even the material surroundings that we ignore feel melancholy. Additionally, his exceptional talent to capture the essence of simplicity in the midst of urban and industrial life. As we plunge farther into his literary universe, it becomes apparent that simplicity comes in all shapes, and plays a vital role in structuring the plot of his work. In the context of urbanization, industrialization, Jibanananda Das' poetry offers an agonizing reminder of the beauty that dwells in simplicity of life against the backdrop of urban and industrial thought when human life and the surroundings evolve increasingly bigger and complex each day. This view also received a place in “Poth Hata(Walking)” when the poet said-

*So natural, uncomplicated as that monument- and star-filled Calcutta?*

*I glance down: cigar burning silently, a gust of wind full of chaff and dust.*

*I shut my eyes, stand aside. Withered leaves, all brown, are blown*

*From trees. In Babylon just so I walked alone at night for some such*

*Reason. Why, I have no idea today, thousands of hectic years later.*

The way Jibanananda Das was describing Kolkata in this poem through his observation, resembles him as a flaneur. Flaneur is a French word and also a literary term that refers to a person who stroll around the city without a proper purpose but try to perceive his surroundings; more likely they used to observe the urban life, lifestyle of 19 century's society. This flaneur

culture flourished in the mid 19th century Paris in a broad way and became an important part of literature. Later, it expanded all over Europe, especially in Berlin. The initial use of this term was connected to impulsive young men and signified status, masculinity and dandyism. As a consequence, an affluent masculine gaze dominates several early works linked to the matter (“Flâneur - Modern Art Terms and Concepts”). These flâneur people had a close connection with the elite people as well and in the Impressionist<sup>8</sup> paintings where painters have exhibited the Flâneur among the city crowd, cafes and in the streets. French poet Charles Baudelaire in his essay *The Painter of Modern Life (1863)* denoted flâneur as the dilettante observer (Tate).

Yet, for several reasons, I cannot agree that Das was a flâneur. Yes, he may have roamed the streets of Calcutta and observed everything, tried to understand this city life, but the presence of elite essence that the actual flâneur community carries, this was absent within Jibanananda Das. For him, strolling in the city was a kind of detox for his dog-tired, imperfect personal life.

However, throughout Das' poetry, life and simplicity arises as a constant pattern illustrating his sturdy admiration for the greenery of Bengal and the straightforwardness it embodies. He skillfully blends visuals and phrases to convey the minimal beauty that exists in ordinary events, such as the subtle whispering of leaves, the dulcet luminosity of sunset or the docile rhythm of a swiftly flowing river or the lonely signboard of a house.

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<sup>8</sup> Impressionism came from Impressionism, which indicates an art and music movement in France during the mid to late 19th century.

## Chapter 2: Bengal & Its Nature

Undoubtedly, Jibanananda Das is a noteworthy shaper of modern Bengali poetry and one of the leading poets of the post-Rabindra era. His love and compassion for Bengal and its nature have been flaunted in his poetry repeatedly through the colors and forms in a variety of ways. The way in which he captures Bengal and its nature, and expresses his thoughts based on different themes, these artistic deliberations were not seen in the works of other contemporary poets and writers of his time.

Das' poetry is often characterized by evocative imagery, poetic syntax, and a profound sensation of contemplation. He drives into the human psyche, addressing topics like isolation, affection, nostalgia, existentialism, and ambiguity. What unifies his writing is his capability to seamlessly weave parts of the natural world throughout his sentences. He seeks sanctuary in nature, acquiring motivation from the surroundings, trees and shrubs, and living organisms around him. Das, through his poems has immortalized his intense adoration for Bengal and its nature. That is why, his poetry is structured with the natural elements sometimes as a metaphor or as simile or as an appealing confession of his love for beloved motherland.

### The Love For Bengal

*When I return to the banks of the Dhansiri, to this Bengal,  
Not as a man, perhaps, but as a salik bird or white hawk,  
Perhaps as a dawn crow in this land of autumn's new harvest,  
I'll float upon the breast of fog one day in the shade of a jackfruit tree.*

*Or I'll be some young girl's pet duck – ankle bells upon her feet –  
 And I'll spend the day floating on duckweed-scented waters,  
 When again I come, smitten by Bengal's rivers and fields, to this  
 Green and kindly land, Bengal, mitened by Jalangi river's waves. [1]*

This is the first paragraph from Das' most celebrated poem “Abar Ashibo Phire(When I Return)” which is translated into English by Clinton B. Seely. Though the verses the poet reveals his urge and profound desire to re-birth in this Bengal, not as human but in different forms like a shalik bird or white hawk, as a dawn crow or autumn's new harvest and would love to spend his days and nights by the bank of Dhanshiri or the nearby field to delve into the mesmerizing elegance of Bengal.

The place he mentioned Dhanshiri, is a river located in the Barisal division, Jhalokati district in Southern Bangladesh. As per lore, local people said during Jibanananda's visit to his maternal relative's house, he fell in love with the mystic beauty of Dhanshiri river. Later, he wrote this poem as a letter to Dhanshiri, confessing his wish to come back to this place as many times as he takes birth in this world. Religious views often state that a person can be reborn in this earth in many forms and for that Das also pointed that he will be glad to be reborn in his beloved motherland in the form of any living creature.

*Perhaps I'll watch the buzzard soar in the sunset's breeze.  
 Perhaps I'll listen to a spotted owl screeching from a simul tree branch.  
 Perhaps a child scatters puffed rice upon the grass of some home's courtyard.*

*On the Rupsa river's murky waters a youth perhaps steers his dinghy with  
Its torn white sail. Reddish clouds scud by, and in the darkness, coming  
To their nest, I shall see white herons. Among them all is where you'll find me. [2]*

The second paragraph of this poem, the poet explains, if the poet is fortunate enough to be re-born in this Bengal, then the poet can be found among the sunset's breeze or the call of an owl or crowd of the white bucks.

However, this poem not only has immortalized his deep love for Bengal but also showcased an intimate connection between the natural beauty of Bengal and its surroundings, and his views of the calm, ethereal landscape of Bengal have been particularly poignant that provoked him to come back to this land time and again.

### **Appreciation of Bengal's Landscape**

Apart from “Abar Ashibo Phire”, his other notable poem is “Banglar Mukh” which is taken from "Ruposhi Bangla" kabyagrantha..

*I have gazed at Bengal's face, and hence the world's beauty  
I no longer go to seek. In the darkness, I awake and glimpse  
Upon a fig tree, sitting underneath a big umbrella-looking leaf,  
The early morning magpie robin. I notice all around me piles of leaves  
Of jam and banyan, of jackfruit, hijal, and ashvattha, lying still;  
Their shade falls on the cactus clump, on the shati copse.[1]*

This poem is a wonderful example of Das' heartfelt appreciation of Bengal's majestic landscape. The verses of this poem emphasize the poet's vision of Bengal and as he is mesmerized by the enchanting beauty of Bengal, Das stated that as he has seen the shape of the world in the natural beauty of Bengal, he no longer seeks beauty in the variations of the world. Sauntering in the darkness of dawn he saw the gigantic leaves of the fig tree were spread like an umbrella under it a Magpie Robin finds safe shelter; his nest of peace.

*I know not when near Champa, Chand, from his boat, the Honeybee,  
Had seen Bengal's exquisite beauty, those selfsame azure shadows cast by  
Hijal, banyan, tamal trees. Behula, too, upon a raft out on the Ganges river,  
When the sliver of a waning moon had died away atop some sandy shoal,  
Had seen countless banyan and ashvattha, by the golden paddy fields,  
Heard the shyama songbird's gentle tune, and once had gone to Amara, where  
When she danced her clip-winged-wagtail-bird-like dance at Indra's court,  
Bengal's rivers, fields, bhant blossoms wept like ankle bells around her feet.*

In the second para of this poem, Das mentioned Bengal's medieval poem “Manasha Mangal<sup>9</sup>” and its three significant characters - Behula<sup>10</sup>, Lakhindar<sup>11</sup> and Chand Sawdagar<sup>12</sup>. “Manasa Mangal ” is based on the snake goddess Manasa and her worship. He felt that when Chad

<sup>9</sup> Manashamangal is one of the oldest Mangal Kavya that carries tales about snake goddess Manasha and her worship. Devotees’ worship her in the hope that she will prospect all from snakes.

<sup>10</sup> Behula : She is the protagonist character of the medieval epic of Assam and Bangla’s Manashamangal Kavya and wife of Lakhindar.

<sup>11</sup> Lakhindar : The youngest son of Chan Sawdagar.

<sup>12</sup> Chan Sawdagar was a rich and powerful sea marchant of Champak Nagar and a die heart devotee of Lord Shiva.

Sawdagar of Champak Nagar <sup>13</sup>went to bet with his seven honeyed dingas, this soft beauty of Bengal brought deep peace to his heart. He also presented the tragedy of newly wed Behula's sorrow. Das' thinks that on the day of Krishna Dwadashi<sup>14</sup> Moonlight night, when Behula floated her dead husband Lakhinder on a raft in Gangur river, the golden harvest of a nearby field also witnessed such numerous banyan trees in addition to Behula's vicissitude. However, Das' heart was touched by hearing the soft song of Bengal's bird, and ached at the same time imagining Behula's misfortune. As he is deeply connected with the Bengla's flora and fauna, he believes that just like he is empathetic and can telepathy with the natural world, the same as others also have such emotional bond with beautiful Bengal's aesthetic landscape. Because of this perception, he assumed the rivers, fields, and flowers of Bengal also felt the sadness like him, when Behula performed a dance wholeheartedly with a broken cymbal in Indra<sup>15</sup>'s assembly Amravati<sup>16</sup>, for bringing back her husband's life.

Both of the poems limned poet's yearning to return to Bengal, notably Kolkata and his hometown Barisal, where he emphasizes his eagerness to immerse himself and assimilate the unique charm of Bengal. Das' literary works have elevated expectations for Modernist Ecocriticism, as he competently wove concerns regarding the environment inside his poetry, distinguishing them from traditional literature.

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<sup>13</sup> Champak Nagar is a small town in Agartala, the state capital of Tripura, India.

<sup>14</sup> Krishna Dwadashi : Hare Krishna means dark and dwadashi points to the twelfth day of the lunar calendar according to Hindu calendar.

<sup>15</sup> According to Hindu mythology, Indra is the king of Gods and god of.

<sup>16</sup> Amravati is the ninth largest city in Maharashtra, India. But here Amravati is indicated as the city of heaven from the Hindu mythological perspective.



### **Chapter 3 : Color, Concern & Love**

A master of words, Jibanananda Das has painted his poetic canvas using color shades like dull hue, rust, muted green, gray and black and nuanced language.

Being a modernist writer, he created the plots of his poetry the way he observes his surroundings starting from the rural landscape to urban life, complexity of human life and the tender emotions of human heart. The way he followed the minimal concept, reflected through the utilization of muted color coordination and brief delineation in his writings. In addition, his poems hold the lowkey yet conspicuous tone like soft confession, dimmed light of concern, affection and gentle wishes which elevated the mood of his writings more appealing and impressively effective towards his readers. The difference between the other Bengali writers and Das, come into prominence in these points makedly. However, this combination of color and tone has not only demonstrated the view of how he discovered natural and material words but also how connected everything with feminine characteristics and immoral love.

The presence of women in his poetry has created a lot of curiosity in the minds of his readers but sadly, no one has been able to solve the mystery of the real identity of women in Das's poetry.

According to some, through Banalata Sen, Akashlina and other nameless women he indicates his wife Labanyaprabha Das (nee Gupta). Others believe he refers to his secret lover.

His conjugal life was in a distance with his wife. As a result, many people also think that he wrote from the idea of Labanyaprabha as he imagined or desired to see it. Also in another way, some critics think that since he is a poet of nature, his infinite love and appreciation for the

nature of Bengal, and the concerns for human civilization has been expressed in a female form in his poetry.

"Banalata Sen" which is one of the most eminent poems of Das, carries the perfect blend of color, concern, and female characteristics. Das said-

*Her hair was like an ancient darkling night in Vidisha<sup>17</sup>,  
Her face, the craftsmanship of Sravasti. As the helmsman when,  
His rudder broken, far out upon the sea adrift,  
Sees the grass-green land of a cinnamon isle, just so  
Through the darkness, I saw her. Said she, "Where have you been so long?"  
And raised her bird's-nest-like eyes—Banalata Sen from Natore<sup>18</sup>.*

In this poem, the poet sings the hymn of glorious love that enlivens the inner world of immortal humanity. Even if the individual dies, humanity and civilization do not die. For thousands of years, this human being has sustained its existence on earth through various ups and downs of civilization. The poet in his consciousness has felt the motion and restlessness of the imperishable human beings walking through the ages. He has been walking the path of the world for thousands of years with the experience of that immortal human being. He also resides in the world of ancient Indian kings Bimbisara<sup>19</sup> and Ashoka<sup>20</sup>, now grayed out in the lap of a forgotten past. From there he crossed the path of the city of Vidarbha<sup>21</sup>, which is shrouded in the

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<sup>17</sup> Vidisha: A district in Madhya Pradesh, India

<sup>18</sup> Natore : A district in Rajshahi division, Bangladesh

<sup>19</sup> Bimbisara was the King of Magadha and belonged to the Haryanka dynasty

<sup>20</sup> Ashoka, popularly known as Ashoka the Great, was the third Mauryan Emperor of Magadha

<sup>21</sup> Vidarbha: A state in Maharashtra , India

darkness of the distant past. And while traversing this vast path, the poet associates himself with a weary traveler. As the white foam is created by the impact of one wave after another on the ocean, the strange wave of life that the poet saw rising on the side of his path, is now like the ocean wave and overflowing around him.

He may have compared the destruction, survival, and complexity of this human civilization with the commotion of his married life. At the same time, he defines Banalata Sen's hair as thick black and deep like the reservoir of that destructive civilization. The distance between him and his wife, living like strangers even under the same roof, compared their uncertain relationship to that of the immortal civilization. He compared the difficulties of life with the dark and imperishable human beings, sustaining their existence on earth.

Despite all the soberness of life, Das found peace within Banalata Sen of Natore.

Basically it can be said that through this poem he has praised the beauty of Banalata Sen as well as defined the difficult situation of her married life. The natural elements he mentions here are completely muted in color, giving a different kind of solemnity. Briefly, he sheds light on the complexity of human life, love and the form of women through this Banalata Sen poem.

**Discussion**

I am neither a literature expert, nor a critic. I am only a conscious reader of Jibanananda Das. He is one of my favorite poets in Bengali literature. That is the reason that I have decided to work on him and written this paper entirely from the reader's point of view. Poetry can be interpreted by observing it in different ways. I have presented my research paper based on my own perspectives and the research investigation of other researchers.

Needless to say, Jibanananda Das has been identified by everyone as the poet of nature, the spearhead of Bengal's modern literature. He has composed unimaginable poems and stories due to the masterful combination of using short and simple language, subtle themes that we ignore, use of muted colors, charming softness of nature etc. The poems I have discussed here, the deep love for Bengal has been revealed, as well as the expression of being impressed by the charm of Bengal's natural beauty, love, life and our many delicate feelings and trivial things around us. Since the basic elements of Jibanananda's poetry are nature-based, modernist eco-critical theory is implicit and prominent in the themes discussed here.

At the same time, the Kallol Era, which was an important period for Bengali literature, has also been discussed here in this paper. This Kallol era is called the renaissance era of Bengali literature and Jibanananda's name is closely associated with this era. Not only the name of Das, but those who went against the flow of traditional writing structure in that era and shaped their thoughts in the form of poems and stories, are also an integral part of the Kallol era.

## Conclusion

While working on the subject, I got to know a lot more about Jibanananda Das and my world of knowledge widened about Jibanananda Das more in detail, as well as I got to learn about the rise of Bengali literature (Kallol Era) of post Rabindrik time and the literary works of his time period. Also, I learned about the deep spiritual relationship between humans and nature. I was able to understand how due to urbanized life we have neglected the subtle and beautiful things around us and realized deeply how in the touch of modernity we are forgetting and denying our roots in many ways. During my research on the poems of Jibanananda Das, I realized that he has given us important advice through the poems and that is that the relationship of humans with nature is very close and to maintain the balance of this relationship with nature, we have to be aware of the essentiality of nature. He also wanted to imply that no matter how far we go, our identity revolves around our motherland which we must not deny.

The immensity that lies within the simplicity and minute beauty of nature is revealed only in the writings of Jibanananda Das and to understand this feeling we have to perceive our surroundings. His poetry typically addresses subjects together with nature, love, simplicity of life, fast forwardness of urban lifestyle and the human circumstance. His use of vivid imagery and unconventional syntax conjures up a modernist fashion, however his emphasis at the surroundings and the relationship between humans and nature coincides with ecocriticism

thoughts. The confluence of human and herbal additives is one-of-a-kind. When a concept moves him, he paperwork it with words, analogies, and visuals that distinguish him from anyone else.

Jibanananda Das' poetry is intended to be felt, instead of simply studied. His blending of human and ecological elements is a pure expression of modernist eco-critical literature.

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